

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A steering apparatus for a vehicle comprising:

a body-side bracket attached to ~~the~~ a vehicle body;

a column assembly supported by said body-side bracket and ~~consisting of~~ including an inner column for supporting a steering shaft to be rotatable and an outer jacket for supporting said inner column to be movable in ~~the~~ an axial direction; and

telescopic clamping means for fixing the steering shaft at an adjustment position by clamping said inner column through said outer jacket,

wherein said outer jacket is provided with a slit ~~entirely along the axial direction~~ formed through said outer jacket over an entire axial length of said outer jacket.

2. (Original) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 1, wherein the steering shaft is supported to be rotatable at least at two points in said

inner column, and said steering shaft is extendable and contractible outside said inner column in the axial direction and on a lower side thereof.

3. (Currently Amended) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 1, wherein said inner column ~~is expanded into a deformed non-circular form~~ has a non-circular cross-section and ~~the~~ an inner diameter ~~periphery of said outer jacket is also shaped into a deformed portion~~ has a non-circular form cross-section correspondingly thereto.

4. (Previously Presented) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 1, wherein said inner column is provided with an axial stopper member for preventing rotation which is extended from said inner column to pass through said slit.

5. (Currently Amended) A steering ~~column~~ apparatus for a vehicle comprising:

an inner column for supporting a steering shaft to be rotatable;

an outer jacket for supporting said inner column ~~from the~~ at an outer peripheral side thereof; and

a bracket attached to a vehicle body for supporting said outer jacket ~~so as to adjust the~~ such that a position of said outer jacket is adjustable ~~thereof on a~~ body-side strength member; and

a clamping mechanism for releasing a clamped state in which the position of said outer jacket is fixed to said bracket ~~and the position of said outer jacket fixed to said bracket~~ so as to allow position adjustment,

wherein said outer jacket has a portion for pressing and supporting said ~~steering inner~~ column ~~from at the~~ outer ~~diameter peripheral~~ side of said ~~steering inner~~ column, and

said ~~outer jacket portion for pressing and supporting is formed~~ provided with a slit entirely along the axial direction of the steering ~~formed through said~~ outer jacket over an entire axial length of said outer jacket.

6. (Currently Amended) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 5, wherein:

the outer jacket has a retaining portion, ~~with the a~~ minimum inner diameter portion for pressing and retaining the inner column ~~from at the~~ outer peripheral side thereof, and an axially extending cylindrical inner

diameter portion which is of larger diameter than said
minimum inner diameter portion and which is connected to
said retaining portion through an inclined step portion
~~and which is extended in the axial direction with the~~
~~inner diameter portion larger than said retaining~~
~~portion; and~~

said inner column comprises a cylindrical first
outer diameter portion with a predetermined length which
is partially pressed and supported by said ~~retaining~~
~~portion with the~~ minimum inner diameter portion of said
outer jacket from the outer diameter side thereof and
which is extended in the ~~an~~ axial direction to face said
cylindrical inner diameter portion of said outer jacket,
and a ~~large~~ second outer diameter portion which is
connected to said ~~cylindrical~~ first outer diameter
portion through the ~~an~~ inclined step portion, is pressed
and supported by said cylindrical inner diameter portion
of said outer jacket, and has a diameter larger than that
of said ~~cylindrical~~ first outer diameter portion.

7. (Currently Amended) A steering apparatus for a
vehicle according to Claim 6, wherein:

said inner column supports the steering shaft at two
points in the axial direction through bearings; and

a bearing on a lower side, out of said bearings, is provided at a lower end of said ~~cylindrical~~ first outer diameter portion of said inner column.

8. (Currently Amended) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 2, wherein said inner column ~~is expanded into a deformed~~ has a non-circular form cross-section and the an inner diameter periphery of said outer jacket ~~is also shaped into a deformed portion~~ has a non-circular form cross-section correspondingly thereto.

9. (Previously Presented) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 2, wherein said inner column is provided with an axial stopper member for preventing rotation which is extended from said inner column to pass through said slit.

10. (New) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 1, wherein said outer jacket is pivotably connected at a lower end thereof to the vehicle body.

11. (New) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 10, further comprising a body-side lower bracket,

through which the lower end of said outer jacket is pivotably connected to the vehicle body.

12. (New) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 5, wherein said outer jacket is pivotably connected at a lower end thereof to a vehicle body.

13. (New) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 12, further comprising a body-side lower bracket, through which the lower end of said outer jacket is pivotably connected to the vehicle body.

14. (New) A steering apparatus for a vehicle comprising:

- a body-side bracket attached to a vehicle body;
- a column assembly supported by said body-side bracket, said column assembly including
 - an inner column for supporting a steering shaft so as to be rotatable, and
 - an outer jacket for supporting said inner column so as to be movable in an axial direction; and
 - a telescopic clamping mechanism operable to fix the steering shaft at an adjustment position by clamping said inner column through said outer jacket,

wherein said outer jacket is provided with a slit formed through said outer jacket over an entire axial length of said outer jacket.

15. (New) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 14, wherein the steering shaft is supported to be rotatable at least at two points in said inner column, and said steering shaft is extendable and contractible outside said inner column in the axial direction and on a lower side thereof.

16. (New) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 14, wherein said inner column has a non-circular cross-section and an inner periphery of said outer jacket has a non-circular cross-section corresponding thereto.

17. (New) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 14, wherein said inner column is provided with an axial stopper member for preventing rotation, which is extended from said inner column to pass through said slit.

18. (New) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 14, wherein said outer jacket is pivotably connected at a lower end thereof to the vehicle body.

19. (New) A steering apparatus for a vehicle according to Claim 18, further comprising a body-side lower bracket, through which the lower end of said outer jacket is pivotably connected to the vehicle body.